

Statement on Senate Action on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation

October 7, 1997

Today was not the end of this fight for campaign finance reform but the beginning. The Republican leadership and a minority of the Senate used procedural maneuvers to block the obvious will of a majority of United States Senators to support bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation. I will fight for this measure as hard as necessary, for as long as necessary. And I call on all Senators to realize that the bipartisan McCain-Feingold measure is our best chance to move forward with reform.

Remarks on Departure for Newark, New Jersey, and an Exchange With Reporters

October 8, 1997

Welfare Reform

The President. Good morning. I ran for President with a challenge to our country to replace the broken welfare system with one that expands opportunity, demands responsibility, and reflects our values of faith, work, and families.

Since I took office, we've worked hard to make this vision a reality. First, by working with 43 States to launch innovative experiments in welfare reform, and then by enacting a welfare reform law that challenged all our States and all people involved in the system to do far more to move from welfare to work.

Today we received yet another piece of evidence that welfare reform is working far better than anyone had predicted it would. We learned that welfare rolls have continued their unprecedented decline, dropping by another 250,000 people in the most recent month alone, one of the largest monthly drops ever. Altogether, we have seen our welfare rolls shrink by more than 1.7 million people since I signed the welfare reform law and by more than 3.6 million people, or 26 percent, since I took office.

This is a truly historic achievement for America. It shows that we can accomplish

great things when our policies promote work and reflect our values. We're building an America where all families have the chance to center their lives around work, family, and responsibility.

But we have more to do to ensure that all those who can work are able to work. The private sector here must do more to take the lead. The balanced budget law I signed last August not only repealed unfair cuts that targeted legal immigrants but also created a \$3 billion welfare-to-work program and increased incentives for businesses to hire former welfare recipients.

For our part, we've set a goal of hiring 10,000 people off the welfare rolls to fill existing jobs in the Federal Government. Later today the Vice President, who has led this initiative, will report on our progress in doing our part.

We are working hard here to change lives to empower all Americans to seize the new opportunity of a new century. I am very encouraged by these welfare numbers. We now have the smallest percentage of our people on welfare in about three decades after the biggest drop in the welfare rolls in history. This proves that this system can work. But to get to the rest of the people, we have to have more help in creating these jobs, the businesses have to take advantage of the tax credits, and the municipal governments and others have to take advantage of the \$3 billion fund. But this is great news for America today, and I must say I am very, very pleased.

Wolf [Wolf Blitzer, Cable News Network].

1996 Campaign Finance Inquiry

Q. Mr. President, Senator Thompson says that it's time for you to take personal responsibility for the campaign finance irregularities and relieve Janet Reno of her responsibility and simply ask for an independent counsel on your own. How do you respond to Senator Thompson on that?

The President. Well, I think that, first of all, I have assumed responsibility. We set up a system that has given Senator Thompson 100,000 pages of documents. And I was surprised that these films had been subpoenaed and not turned over. I think there is a logical reason for it. I'm frustrated whenever there has not been absolutely full compliance, but